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THE EVIDENCE FOR WILDMAN IN HUBEI PROVINCE, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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ABSTRACT: Wildman investigations were conducted in Hubei Province, People's Republic of China, in 1982. The distribution of Wildman reports, current research, the so-called "monkey babies," morphological traits of the supposed Wildman, and the evidence (footprints, nests, fecal remains, eyewitness accounts, and hair) are discussed.

Interviews with other investigators, interviews with eyewitnesses, translations of Mandarin-language manuscripts, and viewing of some of the evidence were conducted. It is unlikely that a bipedal primate still unknown to science is involved, but the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out.

INTRODUCTION

Reports continue to appear, arousing considerable public interest and scientific skepticism, concerning the presence (or the survival) of human/ape-like creatures in the forests, mountains, or snowscapes of such far-flung places as the Pacific Northwest Coast of the United States and Canada (Sasquatch or Bigfoot), Nepal (the Yeti or the Abominable Snowman), and now the People's Republic of China (Wildman). What is most interesting is that such reports from these different regions have many striking similarities, despite the fact that, until rather recently, there has probably been minimal contact among the cultures and the peoples making the reports. In China, reports of Wildman appear in T'Ang Dynasty (A.D. 618–907) texts, and perhaps even earlier (Zhou 1982).

Why the striking similarity among such reports? A full answer to this question awaits further analysis. One or a combination of four facts may be a basis for an explanation.

1. There is something basically similar to all the cultures reporting such creatures. Perhaps a fear of, or fascination with, relatively inaccessible mountain and forest regions leads to similar reports.

2. Despite the high degree of improbability, especially in ancient times, reports of such sightings in different areas of the world are fueled by the

diffusion of reports from elsewhere. This is more likely to happen now, with sophisticated means of communication, than was previously true.

3. Perhaps such sightings reflect reality; perhaps some of the reports are true. Perhaps the Yeti exists in Nepal, perhaps Sasquatch exists in the Pacific Northwest, and perhaps Wildman exists in the People's Republic of China. Although this is the most stimulating of all the possibilities, it is also the least probable.

4. The similarities of such reports merely represent people's conceptions of what such creatures would look like if they existed. After all, the model for such creatures is a combination of traits of living humans and living non-human primates (monkeys and apes). In some areas with reports of such creatures, however, it is unlikely that many people have ever seen an ape or a monkey.

The co-authors approach this subject from different academic backgrounds and experiences. Hu was part of a Chinese scientific team that investigated reports of Wildman in the Shen Nong Jia Mountains of Hubei Province. Poirier interviewed several Chinese Wildman investigators while he worked in Hubei in 1982. Chen also worked in Hubei in 1982, and he adds the necessary cultural anthropological perspective and provides English translations of Chinese reports. Hu is a biologist, while Poirier is a physical anthropologist and Chen a cultural anthropologist.

Distribution of Wildman Reports

Wildman reports come mainly from three areas of China: Szechwan, Kweichou (Guizhou) and Hubei Provinces. Zhou (1982) states that encounters with Wildman have also been reported in Yunnan, Shanxi, Zhejiang, Fujien and Anhui Provinces, and the Autonomous Regions of Tibet and Xinjiang. Szechwan and Hubei Provinces share a western (Hubei) and eastern (Szechwan) border. Kweichou's northern border is shared mainly with the southern border of Szechwan. The main focus of our investigation, and of other recent investigations by teams of Chinese researchers (one team including 110 people), is the Shen Nong Jia mountains in Hubei Province (Fig. 1).

In 1976, six community leaders were driving their vehicle near the village of Chungshuya, in the Shen Nong Jia District, when their headlights shone upon a "strange, tail-less creature with reddish fur" standing in the road (Topping 1981: 66). It is important to note that the creature had reddish fur, and we will return to that point later. Five members of the party approached this creature to within a few feet. The creature is reported to have been as curious about the observers as they were of it. Eventually, it disappeared into the darkness.

This report was forwarded to China's prestigious Academy of Sciences in Beijing (Peking). Scientists from the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and

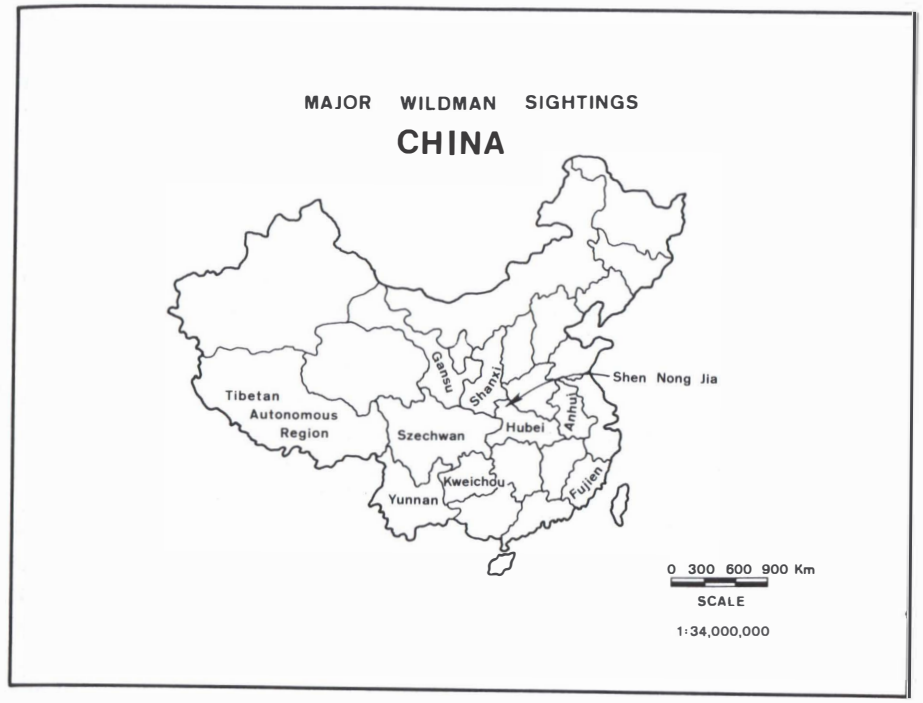

Fig. 1.—Location of Shen Nong Jia in Hubei Province, People's Republic of China.

Paleoanthropology launched a full-scale investigation that has since turned up hundreds of Wildman reports in central China.

Ecology of Shen Nong Jia

Shen Nong Jia, one of the largest forest reserves in central China, is home for many forms of wildlife, including several species of rare birds, many forms of cats, the wolf, the black bear, a number of kinds of deer and wild goats, and two species of macaque monkey (the rhesus and stump-tailed macaque). Shen Nong Jia is also one of the few areas in China to have the rare and endangered golden monkey, *Rhinopithecus roxellanae,* which lives at 2,000–3,000 meters (6,400–9,600 feet) above sea level. Since 1975, the Chinese government has listed *Rhinopithecus* as a first priority endangered species, meaning that this animal is among the most endangered of China's wildlife (Poirier in press, Poirier and Hu in press).

Shen Nong Jia is also the home of a number of albino animals, including bears, deer, monkeys, and an unidentified carnivore. Six albino bears have

been captured since 1949. Chinese scientists are unable to explain this apparently high incidence of albinism. A search for radioactive emissions, for example, has proved inconclusive. Poirier and Davidson (1979) reported a high incidence of albino monkeys (*Macaca cyclopis,* the Taiwan macaque) and bears on Taiwan. They were also unable to explain this phenomenon.

Shen Nong Jia is located at about 30–31° north latitude and 110–111° east longitude. The maximum elevation is about 3,200 meters (10,240 feet), and the area covers about 3,200 square kilometers. The area is classified as subtropical or temperate, depending upon the altitude. The flora and fauna have eastern Asiatic traits, and exhibit tropical, subtropical, and temperate elements. Shen Nong Jia is the eastern distribution of animals from Szechwan and Kweichou provinces. While some virgin forest remains, exploitation and forest fires in the past 30 years have greatly damaged the region. Virgin forests are today found only at the highest elevations and in narrow inaccessible gorges. Unfortunately, descriptions of the area's flora and fauna in old texts are only historical reminders of what the area once looked like.

Utilizing ancient Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960–1279) texts, Hu suggests that there has been continual ecological change at Shen Nong Jia. The climate has become cooler since the time of the Sung Dynasty. The high evergreen forests and continuous tropical/subtropical forests are being destroyed. The flora and fauna are now in transition.

At about 2,000 meters (6,400 feet), there is snow as early as September. Rainfall is mostly concentrated in the months of July and August. The area is affected by the southeastern monsoons in the summer months, and the Siberian air mass affects the weather during the winter. Shen Nong Jia is hotter and more humid than western Chinese mountain areas, and is relatively drier than the hill areas of southwestern China.

The eastern part of Shen Nong Jia extends into Szechwan Province, where the forest is dense and difficult to penetrate. The southern part exhibits less dense vegetation, and a main road divides the area. The northeastern part is penetrated by many roads and the forest is less dense.

Brief Review of Wildman Research

Perhaps the first recorded Wildman report was made over 2,000 years ago when the statesman-poet Qu Yuan made frequent references in his poems to the "Shangui" (mountain ogres). Seven centuries later, during the T'Ang Dynasty (A.D. 618–907), the historian Li Yanshow described a band of Wildmen in the forests of Hubei Province. During the Ming Dynasty (A.D. 1368–1644), the pharmacologist Li Shizhen mentioned several kinds of Wildman in the 51st volume of his *Compendium of Materia Medica.* In the 1700's, the poet Yuan Mei described a strange "monkeylike, yet not a monkey" creature in Shanxi Province (Topping 1981).

In 1974, three scientists went to Shen Nong Jia to search for Wildman.

This precipitated the more extensive expeditions in 1977, when Chinese scientists first began to seriously investigate Wildman reports in Shen Nong Jia. This team was headed by the then governor of Hubei Province, and it included 110 people. From 1979 to 1980, a team of 20 people investigated Wildman sightings. Neither the 1977 nor the 1979–80 teams reported seeing the creature. As of 1982, three self-supporting adventurers were in Shen Nong Jia continuing the research.

A conference was held in Wuhan, Hubei Province, in 1980 to discuss Wildman sightings. This conference was apparently a battleground where the two opposing camps, supporters and non-supporters, clashed. The conference failed to produce a consensus, a situation that still exists today. A second conference was held in December, 1982. A Wildman Study Association was founded in 1981, which is headquartered in Wuhan, and which consists almost entirely of supporters of the existence of Wildman.

Various investigative teams have amassed much data on Wildman, but the creatures themselves have not been seen by them. Photographers from the Beijing Scientific and Educational Films Studio spent almost two years searching the forest regions, but never even caught a glimpse of a Wildman. A film crew from Japan also went to Shen Nong Jia in 1980 in search of this elusive creature. They had no better results.

Zhou (1982) reviews Wildman investigations in other areas of China, e.g., the Tibet Autonomous Region and Yunnan, Shanxi, and Zhejiang Provinces.

The So-Called "Monkey Babies"

There is a human birth defect that produces a condition that the local people refer to as "monkey babies." Afflicted individuals are often claimed to result from a mating between a male Wildman and a local female villager, or to be the result of a mating between some members of a relict population of the extinct primate *Ramapithecus,* whose remains are found in China and date to about 8–10 million years ago. Other remains of this primate occur in India, Pakistan, southern Europe and Kenya, to list a few locales. The taxonomic position of *Ramapithecus* is in dispute (Poirier 1981). Investigators consider *Ramapithecus* to be an ancestral form of 1) an orangutan, 2) both apes and humans, or 3) an ancestral human. We will discuss the supposed relationship between fossil primates and the Wildman below.

In 1970, it was reported that a woman in Hubei Province who had seven children had given birth to three so-called "monkey babies." Two of these infants were females, and one was a male. The children exhibited the following traits: the fontanelles were closed at birth, the head was small and strangely shaped, the intelligence level was low, the children had no speech, they acted strangely, and they often lost their sense of balance. Despite these infirmities, the children were said to be physically healthy, and they did not mind the cold.

Are these so-called "monkey babies" the result of mating between what all scientists consider an extinct primate, i.e., *Ramapithecus* (which would have had somehow to have survived in China for millions of years), and village women, as some suggest? Most certainly the answer would be no.

It must be remembered that the Chinese are generally hairless people, and they have a distaste for body hair. Many Chinese once thought that hairy people were a reversion to an ancestral prototypical ape-man. Fraser (1980: 417) notes that:

> Chinese scientists, for example, are fascinated by the so-called ape babies that are born from time to time. Such infants are covered with body hair from their heads to their toes and are thought to be interesting as a link to our Darwinian past. Much is made in propaganda magazines about them and their "equal opportunity to make contributions to socialism," but they are clearly regarded as freaks and maintained as such. No efforts appear to be made to remove the unwanted hair. I got the distinct impression they were required to go through life with their flowing manes to disprove religious conceptions of the origins of humanity.

Suggestions have been made that Wildman is an atavistic outcast who survived through the ages, and developed societies in the forests. Wildman would, therefore, be a genetic throwback to an earlier form of humanity. The atavism theory implies that Wildman represents humans born with an abnormal amount of hair on their faces and bodies.

While conducting research on rhesus monkeys, *Macaca mulatta,* in Xhin Xhan County, Hubei Province, Poirier and Hu were witnesses to a so-called "monkey baby." This individual walked with a shuffling gait, had a slouched back, had a low misshapen forehead, could only make sounds with no articulate speech, and grinned constantly. He did not appear to have an unusual amount of body hair. This person was considered something of an amusing novelty in the town. He was not, however, a result of a mating between a human and nonhuman primate, as some suggested. Such a mating is genetically impossible because of differences in chromosomal numbers. (Even our closest ape relative, the chimpanzee, has a different chromosomal number than we have. Therefore, mating between humans and chimpanzees is considered practically impossible). Instead, this unfortunate individual suffered genetic mental deficiencies and several physical maladies.

Zhou (1982) reports on his skeletal investigation of a "monkey child" in Szechwan. In his view, the skeleton belonged to a deformed human—a view strengthened by the higher than normal occurrence of human genetic deformities in the area of investigation.

What Does the Wildman Look Like?

An answer to this question relies upon reconstructions of eyewitness accounts. There are no live specimens, no photographs, and no reliable scientific descriptions. The available data consist of footprints, hair, feces, and nests, all of which are controversial and hotly contested evidence.

The morphological traits of the Wildman are based on some 300 "sightings." There is great diversity among the sources of these eyewitness reports. For example, eyewitnesses include government officials, forest workers, People's Liberation Army soldiers, and area natives. Most of the sightings come from the last group. Because of the discrepancies among these reports, there is no doubt that many different phenomena are being called Wildman. In fact, in 1980, a hunter shot what he thought were two Wildman individuals. These turned out, however, to be two of the rare and precious golden monkeys. It also appears that some of the reported sightings of Wildman are descriptions of bears. Perhaps the discrepancy in eyewitness accounts has had something to do with the plethora of names attributed to Wildman, e.g., "red-haired mountain man," "mountain ghost" (perhaps a reference to the existence of albino animals reported in Shen Nong Jia), and "manbear."

Topping (1981: 66) provides the following eyewitness account given by Pang Gensheng, a 33-year-old commune leader, in 1977. This report comes from an encounter that supposedly took place within five feet of the Wildman and lasted about one hour (unlike this close encounter, most encounters are long-range sightings).

> He was about seven feet tall, with shoulders wider than a man's, a sloping forehead, deep-set eyes and a bulbous nose with slightly upturned nostrils. He had sunken cheeks, ears like a man's but bigger, and round eyes, also bigger than a man's. His jaw jutted out and he had protruding lips. His front teeth were as broad as a horse's. His eyes were black. His hair was dark brown, more than a foot long and hung loosely over his shoulders. His whole face, except for the nose and ears, was covered with short hairs. His arms hung down to below his knees. He had big hands with fingers about six inches long and thumbs only slightly separated from the fingers. He didn't have a tail and the hair on his body was short. He had thick thighs, shorter than the lower part of his leg. He walked upright with his legs apart. His feet were each about 12 inches long and half that broad—broader in front and narrow behind, with splayed toes. He was a male. That much I saw clearly.

Reports of a preserved hand and foot supposedly stored in Shanghai could not be confirmed by Poirier in 1982. Zhou (1982) investigated Wildman hand and foot specimens from Zhejiang Province. He concluded that they belonged to a higher primate, and showed morphological traits of both monkeys and apes. Zhou concluded that the hands and feet were not from a Wildman, but might possibly have belonged to an enormous, heretofore undescribed, species of macaque.[1] Based on Poirier and Hu's macaque study in Xhin Xhan County, there are too many so-called unreported macaques in China (Poirier and Hu in press).

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[1] A Research Report by Zhou on his analysis of this evidence has been submitted for publication.—Editor.

Over 60 years ago, in 1922, a member of a local militia reportedly caught a Wildman and sent it to a nearby county. There are, however, no records of this creature. A Wildman was reportedly killed in 1940. None of the reports can be substantiated by current Chinese scientists.

The following description has been pieced together from personal interviews, and from unpublished manuscripts by Shang (1981) and Hu (1981). The creature is erect and supposedly walks bipedally. The tallest creature is said to be over 3 meters (over 9 feet) tall. Most of the reports, however, estimate a height of 2 meters (just over 6 feet). Zhou (1982) reports a height range of 1.2–2.5 meters, representing, perhaps, two types of Wildman. The legs are longer than the arms, and the forelimbs are not used for locomotion, such as swinging through branches. The hands are free, and the forelimbs look human (except that Pang reported that the thumbs were only slightly separated from the fingers). The creature walks flat-footed; one foot (measured from a cast) is 48 centimeters (19 inches) long. The first and second toes are separated from one another by 30°. There is no tail.

One of the most distinctive Wildman traits is its long hair, variously described as reddish, brown, or white. Apparently, this variation cannot be explained by citing seasonal, sex, or age differences. The hair on the back is especially long (contra the report by Pang). Males are said to have a bare spot on the chest about the size of a human hand (but Pang, who reported hitting the Wildman in the chest with a rock, made no mention of this trait). The face is long, but the lower part of the face is narrow. The jaw juts forward (what scientists call prognathism). Although there is a low nasal bridge, the nose is relatively long. The incisor teeth are small, and the canines long. (Pang, however, said the front teeth were as broad as those of a horse.) The ears are large and flop over on the side towards the front. The stomach is large. Females have pendulous breasts, and males have a pendulous penis.

These creatures are said to travel alone (quite unlike other primates generally), to have no permanent home, and do not attack humans. In fact, they are said to flee when encountering humans (although Pang reported that the creature he faced watched him for one hour). When they meet humans they "smile" and chatter—both primate submissive traits. A 1960 report cites a Wildman sitting down, clapping its hands, and making a chattering noise. This report also has the Wildman picking up and eating chestnuts, one of its foods, along with corn and other vegetable matter.

Let us now take a closer look at these traits, dividing them into three broad categories: human, nonhuman, and nonhuman primate (monkey and ape). Some traits are not exclusive to one or another category, but they are illustrative of the mixture of traits said to be characteristic of the Wildman.

Human traits.—Looks human, has no tail, walks bipedally, does not use its arms for locomotion, has free hands, the forelimbs look human, the legs are longer than the arms, sits upright, pendulous breasts and penis.

Nonhuman traits.—Does not make tools, has no language, does not use fire, eats raw food, does not store food, has hair all over its body, has no social life, has excessive prognathism.

Nonhuman primate traits.—Has long hair, has large canines, smiles (what ethologists label a grimace), has a chatter vocalization, eats vegetable matter, sits upright.

Although this is a rough categorization of Wildman traits, it is readily seen that this creature possesses a mixture of human, nonhuman, and nonhuman primate traits. Can such a creature exist?

Claims for the existence of Wildman come from the following kinds of physical evidence: footprints, hair, feces, cave deposits, and nests.

Hair.—Over 100 hairs have been collected that are said to belong to Wildman. The longest of these hairs measures 53 centimeters (21 inches). Some hair was supposedly collected by eyewitnesses; the rest was collected from a tree that a Wildman was believed to have rubbed against. The hair was studied by the Hubei Provincial Medical College and the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology in Beijing. The general consensus is that the hair belongs to a higher primate (monkey, ape, or human).

Footprints.—According to one report, written on the spot and substantiated with photographs: "The prints are of an elongated foot, wider (approaching 4 inches) in front and narrower (approximately 2 inches) at the back. The toe marks are oval in shape, with one somewhat separated from the others. The footprints follow each other in single file, the distance varying between 20 inches and a yard" (Topping 1981: 113). The authors do not know how closely Topping's report approaches the original (the Chinese use the metric system).

More than 1,000 footprints have been reported (Fig. 2). Some of these were cast and then photographed on the spot. Some of the prints suggest that claws tipped the digits, definitely a nonprimate trait. Higher primates have all of their fingers and toes tipped by nails, and not claws. The longest distance measured between two prints is 2.6 meters (8.3 feet). One footprint impression measured 48 centimeters (19 inches) long; the first and second toes were separated by 30°.

Zhou (1982) suggests that there are two types of footprints. One is large, 30–40 centimeters, remarkably similar to human footprints, with the big toe pointing slightly outward. The other type is smaller, about 20 centimeters, and more like the footprints of an ape or monkey, with the big toe evidently diverged.

Feces.—The fecal remains are usually found beside its footprints or in caves. The feces are shaped like a tube, and have an average diameter of 2.5 centimeters (1 inch). On cross-section, the outer layer is brown and the inner layer yellow—indicating the vegetable nature of the diet. Most fecal remains are found at lower altitudes, at about 1,600 meters (5,120 feet). The

FIG. 2.—Casts of supposed footprints of Wildman.

feces contain the remnants of roots, fruit skins, and some small insects which were perhaps ingested along with the vegetable matter.

Caves and nests.—The lowest-lying cave was found at 1,500 meters (4,800 feet). Animal bones are often found associated with these sites. This contrasts with reports that Wildman eats only vegetable material, and casts doubt on the association between the Wildman and the nests/caves. Cave sites average 5 meters (16 feet) deep. No fecal material was found in the caves.

The supposed nests of Wildman were made by pulling seven or eight bamboo trees together. The nests look something like a chair with one high side. Pulling seven or eight bamboo trees together is a prodigious effort, so the creature making this structure must be very strong; bamboo is hard to shape.

Wildman does not hibernate, but is said to change its routine seasonally. In the spring, the creature inhabits gorges; in the summer, it moves to the higher mountains. This movement allows it to take advantage of seasonal food supplies, and to escape the winter snows in the high mountains.

ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE

Let us now take a closer look at some of the specific criticisms of stated facts about Wildman.

"*Monkey babies*".—The so-called "monkey baby," the result of a reputed cross between a human female and a Wildman (itself either a descendant of *Ramapithecus* or a cross between a relict population of Ramapithecines and modern humans) is simply not tenable. *Ramapithecus* is presumed to have been extinct in China for at least 8 million years. Furthermore, at no time since recorded history has the habitat of Shen Nong Jia resembled that now recognized as suitable for *Ramapithecus* habitation. The so-called "monkey babies" simply exhibit genetic disorders.

Footprints.—Because the footprints are made in mud or in bamboo forests, they are distorted, hard to find, and it is difficult to determine what type of animals made the prints. This makes identification of the prints difficult, and interpretation even more difficult. A strong element of subjective judgment is necessary to decide what is or is not a footprint of the Wildman. Casts of the prints are made with plaster of paris, and the final rendition requires considerable touching up. Any final product is highly suspect, and there is considerable room for interpretation. Furthermore, a print of 48 centimeters (19 inches) in length would indicate a very large creature indeed! Considering all the prints, there is great size variation. Some have argued that this is due to individual size differences in the animals making the print. This argument is yet to be made convincingly.

Nests and fecal remains.—This evidence is of dubious value. Conditions surrounding the finds are usually vague, and reports are often contradictory. Chinese panda experts who have examined Wildman nests and fecal remains suggest a close resemblance to the giant panda. However, we know of no sightings of giant pandas in Shen Nong Jia. Topping (1981) reports that a fecal sample of six piles supposedly made by a number of Wildman was found on a steep rock halfway up a mountain. Although it was dry and hard, analysis revealed bits of undigested fruit skins and wild chestnuts. There is no evidence of animal fur or bone fragments. The researchers concluded that the feces could not have been from humans as we know them, nor from a carnivorous animal. Yet the quantity of the feces and the size of the remaining food particles were too small to be from a hoofed animal or a bear. The sample most resembled that of an omnivorous primate (possibly the golden monkey).

Eyewitness reports.—The veracity of eyewitness reports is the greatest problem. How does one interpret the legitimacy of these 300 sightings from such a diversity of sources? Having interviewed several of the original eyewitnesses, Hu is particularly critical of some of these sightings. Few, if any, reports are made by reputable scientists. Most reports come from untrained observers. The wide publicity that reports of the Wildman have received could certainly have colored the reports and/or led to some misinterpretation and possibly even deception.

Eyewitness accounts are very inconsistent. Wildman sightings range from

close up to far away. Despite the inconsistencies, these 300 accounts have been generalized as *the* Wildman. Descriptions vary; despite a wide range of discrepancies concerning such things as hair color, for example, all creatures are called Wildman. Some eyewitnesses who see a supposed Wildman are so frightened by the experience that they are bedridden for a few days. Despite this state of anxiety, they seem to have provided a remarkably lucid accounting of the creature days after the sighting. Is this likely?

Zhou (1982) is particularly critical of some reports. He notes (1982: 23) that:

> . . . it has to be admitted that most . . . [research participants] are not well trained in faunal ecology, primatology, vertebrate paleontology, paleoanthropology, physical anthropology and other disciplines concerned with this topic. Consequently, when they collect and describe evidence, or visit witnesses to obtain first-hand reports, they are not always in a totally objective and scientific frame of mind. This, in turn, can affect the accuracy and reliability of the evidence which they collect. Caution therefore must be exercised when using their materials.

Wildman sightings can be detrimental to local production goals. For example, a 1979 sighting so frightened village women that they refused to work for several days. Local government authorities had to dispatch a special team to search for the Wildman to assuage their fears. Ten days of searching failed to find the creature. It was finally concluded that the women had spotted a bear.

In 1980, in Shen Nong Jia, a hunter saw two golden-haired animals, and shot them thinking they were a Wildman pair. As it turned out, the hunter had killed two rare golden monkeys. This is most distressing, given the endangered status of these monkeys. A trained biologist investigated reports of Wildman in Kweichou Province, and identified the animal as a monkey. (A reported unicorn from the same area was also investigated. This animal turned out to be a Tibetan ram, *Pantholopus hodgsoni,* whose two horns extend upward together. From the side, these two horns resembled one large horn. A fertile imagination, combined with a mistaken impression, led to a sighting of a unicorn. Could the same thing have happened a number of times as concerns Wildman?)

Hair.—In 1982, Poirier was graciously given a hair that supposedly was left by a Wildman while it scratched its back against a tree. The hair is long and of a reddish-orange color, similar to that described as typical of the Wildman in some areas. This hair, however, matched exactly with the long shoulder hair of the golden monkey, *Rhinopithecus roxellanae* (Fig. 3). The longest Wildman hair measures 53 centimeters (21 inches). One museum specimen of a golden monkey we measured had hair 32 centimeters long. Have there been other times when the golden monkey of Shen Nong Jia has been mistaken for Wildman? Certainly, the hair color of the monkey matches many descriptions of Wildman, and the golden monkey has long and flowing

FIG. 3.—A young adult golden monkey, *Rhinopithecus roxellanae,* from Shen Nong Jia. Such animals are sometimes thought to be the Wildman.

hair, as is also described for the Wildman. It should be noted that some of the major areas reporting Wildman—Shen Nong Jia, Szechwan Province, and Kweichou Province—are all areas containing the golden monkey.

The golden monkey is a rare animal, and few people have seen it. Therefore, it is quite likely that it would arouse the curiosity of any observers. Not knowing what the golden monkey is, but perhaps being aware of reports of the reputed Wildman, people might mistake it for the Wildman. In 1980, for example, a golden monkey was captured in Shen Nong Jia. Apparently, some people thought this was a strange animal, and could not recognize it. It immediately acquired human traits (even to the point of being reported that it liked to drive a vehicle!). It was eventually taken to a local hospital, where it died, apparently of an intestinal obstruction. Some people called this monkey a Wildman, and it later led to rumors of Wildman in the area.

A more personal experience of how a strange animal can be generalized into Wildman sightings happened to co-author Poirier. He was the first foreign visitor to Xhin Xhan County, which borders on the Shen Nong Jia District, for a very long time. While not unusually hairy by Western standards, Poirier nevertheless looked strange to the local populace. Standing

about 5′11″ tall, he was also much taller and heavier than local residents. A number of local children stared at him from a safe distance, and ran away horrified at their encounter with what they screamed to others was the Wildman in their midst. Will this encounter become embellished and fit into reports of Wildman in the future?

Conclusions

No definite answer can be given concerning the existence or nonexistence of Wildman in China. Clearly, the reports are inconsistent. The proposed existence of such a creature would undermine current scientific consensus that such a creature is highly unlikely to exist. The burden of the proof lies, therefore, on those who hold that the Wildman exists. The survival of *Ramapithecus,* or of the large extinct primate *Gigantopithecus* (a fossil ape that became extinct in China about 600,000 years ago and perhaps stood 6 feet tall) is highly unlikely. One might counter, however, that the giant panda, which was a contemporary of *Gigantopithecus,* is still very much alive today. Zhou (1982) discusses the *Gigantopithecus* and *Ramapithecus* possibilities in more detail. Even more unlikely—practically impossible according to current genetic information—is the possibility of the mating of human and nonhuman primates.

Given that conventional scientific wisdom denies the existence of a creature such as Wildman, why do such reports continue to appear and have such fascination? As noted previously, reports of creatures similar to Wildman occur on several continents. Do humans have a "need" to believe in the existence of such mysterious creatures? Does the human mind need some imponderables? It has been suggested that, in China, sentimentality and nostalgia may help to explain the continuance of tales of such creatures that are described in ancient texts. The fact that such creatures reside in underpopulated, relatively inaccessible areas must be considered. Such areas are mysterious, frightening, and compelling.

Other factors must also be considered, at least concerning the sightings in Shen Nong Jia. For example, the ex-governor of Hubei Province is an avid supporter of Wildman research. Has his support in the search for this creature pressured the populace of Shen Nong Jia to report findings that they feel would be acceptable? A sighting of Wildman would also garner a considerable amount of public attention. How many people, particularly those in isolated regions, would pass up a chance for some public recognition of themselves or their village? There are other considerations. For example, if someone is so frightened when encountering a Wildman that they are given a few days rest from work, perhaps that is an incentive to "see" such a creature. Finally, there are also economic considerations. Shen Nong Jia is currently being developed as a nature reserve, ostensibly for the golden monkey. However, will reports of the possible existence of the Wildman bring more tourists to the region? Economic gain from such increased tourism is certainly an understandable goal.

The centuries-old riddle of the Chinese Wildman remains unresolved. There is currently not enough evidence to prove the existence of such creatures. Scientific discretion dictates that we either reject claims for the existence of such creatures, or at least withhold judgment until some valid, verifiable evidence is produced. Until contrary evidence is absolutely convincing, however, there is always a possibility that the Wildman exists—but one should not hold one's breath.

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